



# PNEUMONIC PLAGUE

Plague is an infectious disease of animals and humans caused by the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*. *Y. pestis* is found in rodents and their fleas in many areas around the world.

## **Symptoms**

Pneumonic plague occurs when *Y. pestis* infects the lungs. The first signs of illness from pneumonic plague are fever, headache, weakness and cough productive of bloody or watery sputum. The pneumonia progresses over two to four days and may cause septic shock and, without early treatment, death.

## **Infection**

Person-to-person transmission of pneumonic plague occurs through respiratory droplets, which can infect only those people who have face-to-face contact with the ill patient.

## **Vaccination/Prophylaxis**

There is no vaccine against plague. Prophylactic antibiotic treatment for seven days will protect people who have had face-to-face contact with infected patients.

## **Treatment**

Early treatment of pneumonic plague is essential. Several antibiotics are effective, including streptomycin, tetracycline and chloramphenicol.

**For more information, call the North Dakota Department of Health at 701.328.2378.**